



**SEIUHealthcare®**  
United for Quality Care

February 23, 2022

Cecil Smith, CNA

East Hartford

District 1199NE

Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and Members of the Committee, my name is Cecil Smith. I am an employee of Icare and work at 60 West nursing facility in Rocky Hill. I have been working there for almost 9 years. This facility is unlike any other nursing home facility in that we only care for patients from the DOC (Department of Corrections) & CVH (Connecticut Valley Hospital). On a full staffed shift, a typical assignment would consist of 6 residents. However, these days we have to care for 10 residents because we are always working short staffed. A majority of these residents require an assist of two because of mental health & behavioral issues. We have to rush our care with limited supplies.

When Covid entered our facility in 2020, we were devastated, it was rough. Residents were dying one after another and staff were asking, "Who will be next?" We were very scared to answer the call of duty, but because we had a duty to perform, we toughened up. To combat this disease, PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) was in limited supply. We were forced to wear the same surgical mask for 14 days and wear jumpsuits, even though temperatures could reach an unbearable 90 degrees. At the end of our first wave, we lost a total of 10 residents and 1 CNA. That CNA was more than just a co-worker, he was my good friend.

In the last 2 years, working conditions have deteriorated a lot at this facility. CNAs constantly work short staffed and we are working longer hours with limited compensation. I say, "limited" because the Company will only give us a pick up shift bonus on the weekends and not during the week. The agency staff comes to work sometimes, but they come in late and do less work. I don't understand how they are really being helpful?

These working conditions cause a strain on our families, our finances, and our overall mental health. I am here today to let you know that this job is extremely difficult. Not many people in this world have the guts, determination, and the patience to perform this job and care for our residents, especially at this particular facility.

We are urgently asking for your help. The support you gave last year was historical and we have appreciated it, but this industry has been massively underfunded for years, and we are reaching our breaking point. We need more funding for more staff, better wages, and hazard pay for all nursing home workers.

Thank you for your time.